



U.S. Consulate General Johannesburg
Travel Alert for Israel, the West Bank & Gaza Strip
January 12, 2009

The Department of State alerts U.S. citizens that the Israel Defense Force (IDF) is engaged in a military operation against terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. This operation began on December 27, 2008, with aerial and naval bombardment, and expanded on January 3, 2009, to include ground operations. Since the December 19, 2008, expiration of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, terrorist organizations have launched ongoing rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza into southern Israel. The Department of State urges U.S. citizens traveling to and within Israel and the West Bank to maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. No official U.S. Government travel is permitted within the Gaza Strip. Due to the ongoing conflict and limited ability of the U.S. Government to assist American citizens in the Gaza Strip, the Department of State urges American citizens, including journalists and aid workers, to avoid all travel to the Gaza Strip. This Travel Alert expires on January 31, 2009.

U.S. Government employees, including those on temporary duty, currently are restricted from travelling within a 30 kilometer radius of the Gaza Strip, inside of which the vast majority of rockets and mortars have fallen. The Embassy's Regional Security Office must approve any travel of U.S. Embassy employees inside the 30 kilometer radius. Some longer range rockets have landed in Yavne, north of Ashdod, and as far east as Beersheva. The Government of Israel's Home Front Command has ordered residents of all communities within 40 kilometers of the Gaza Strip, including Beersheva, Yavne, and Gadera, to take precautions against the possibility of rocket strikes. Schools are currently closed and provision of some public services has been scaled back in areas considered to be within rocket range. American citizens staying within rocket range should also take appropriate precautions and security measures, which may include staying within a certain distance of a sheltered space and remaining in that space for five minutes after a rocket alert sounds. Specific guidance in English is available at the Home Front Command website: <http://www.oref.org.il/934-en/PAKAR.aspx>.

Within Israel and the West Bank, planned and spontaneous protests against the military actions in Gaza have the potential to turn violent. Security forces have

used tear gas and fired shots in the air to control such incidents. American citizens should remain alert and avoid gatherings of protesters and police. Due to these spontaneous demonstrations, U.S. Embassy employees have been advised to avoid traveling on Highway 65 in the Wadi Ara area between Highway 6 and Highway 66, which is near Um-El-Fahm and en route to Afula. Demonstrations can occur with little or no warning and make traffic unpredictable; demonstrators have also thrown stones at passing vehicles.

Because the current security environment throughout Israel and the West Bank remains unpredictable, U.S. Government employee security measures may be amended at any time including increasing travel restrictions, adding travel bans, relocating U.S. Government staff and contractors to safer areas, or imposing additional restrictions on visiting public places.

Americans in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza should be vigilant about security at all times. They should monitor local news, vary their routes and times, and consider the level of security when visiting crowded public places, such as shopping malls, hotels, restaurants, or entertainment venues. Some American citizens in Gaza and their immediate family members were assisted in departing Gaza on January 2, 2009. American citizens remaining in Gaza should consider notifying the Consulate General in Jerusalem at the address below of their whereabouts in the event they wish to participate in possible future evacuations of foreign nationals from the Gaza Strip.

American citizens are advised to maintain valid travel documents and register with the Department of State or U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv/U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy and the Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor:

- * U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv's Web page, <http://usembassy-israel.org.il/consular/acs/TravelInformation.aspx>, for the latest Warden Message;
- * U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem's Web page, <http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov> for its latest Warden Message, and
- * The U.S. Department of State's, Bureau of Consular Affairs' Web site, www.travel.state.gov.

These links provide access to:

- * The current Worldwide Caution;

- * Travel Warnings, including the Travel Warning for Israel, West Bank and Gaza, and Travel Alerts;
- * Country-Specific Information; and
- * Other resources, such as information about U.S. passports and visas.

For American citizens living and traveling abroad, we encourage you to review valuable security information contained in "A Safe Trip Abroad" at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html.

Travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or outside the United States and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These telephone numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. Federal holidays).

U.S. citizens may contact the American Citizens Services Unit of the Embassy or the Consulate General for further information:

In the event of an emergency, contact the Police at 100 or Fire at 102, as appropriate.

Should you need specific assistance from American Citizens Services at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv:

- * During office hours (7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.), call our switchboard at 03-519-7575.

- * For after hours emergencies, call 03-519-7551; your call will be transferred to the Embassy duty officer.

Should you need specific assistance from American Citizens Services at the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem:

- * During office hours, call 02-628-7137.

- * For after hours emergencies, call 02-622-7250.

Routine Inquiries and Subscription to Informational E-mails:

* For routine American Citizen Services inquiries in Tel Aviv, e-mail AMCTelAviv@state.gov.

* For routine American Citizen Services inquiries in Jerusalem, e-mail JerusalemACS@state.gov.

* To subscribe to Warden Messages and other informational e-mails from U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv, go to <http://usembassy-israel.org.il/consular/acs/index.aspx> and enter your email address, click "subscribe" and then click "Do it".

As always, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions:
The U.S. Embassy is located at 877 Pretorius Street, Arcadia in Pretoria, telephone (27-12) 431-4000 (from South Africa 012-431-4000), fax (27-12) 431-5504 (from South Africa 012-431-5504). The U.S. Embassy web site is <http://usembassy.state.gov/pretoria/>.

The U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg provides consular services for Americans in the Pretoria area. The Consulate General in Johannesburg is located at No. 1 River Street (corner of River and Riviera Roads), Killarney, Johannesburg telephone (27-11) 644-8000 (from South Africa 011-644-8000), fax (27-11) 646-6916 (from South Africa 011-646-6916), after hours emergency (27) 79-111-1684 (from South Africa 079-111-1684). Its consular jurisdiction includes Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West, and Free State provinces.

The Consulate General in Cape Town is located at the 2 Reddam Avenue, Westlake, Cape Town, telephone (27-21) 702-7300 (from South Africa 021-702-7300), fax (27-21) 702-7493 (from South Africa 021-702-7493), after hours emergency (27) 79-111-0391 (from South Africa 079-111-0391). Its consular jurisdiction includes Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Northern Cape provinces.

The Consulate General in Durban is located at the Old Mutual Building, 31st floor, 303 West Street, telephone (27-31) 305-7600 (from South Africa 031-305-7600), fax (27-31) 305-7691 (from South Africa 031-305-7691), after hours emergency (27) 79-111-1445 (from South Africa 079-111-1445). Its consular jurisdiction is KwaZulu-Natal Province.